



PRESENTER'S GUIDE TO ELECTION SECURITY



Introduction

Since the 2016 election, voters have had heightened concerns about election security. While this topic has always been a key priority for election officials, most of the public does not realize the many steps election administrators have in place to keep elections secure, accurate and accessible. The **U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC)** has prepared the following video and resources to help election administrators discuss this important topic with a broad spectrum of audiences.

This guidebook complements the EAC's election security video and contains the following resources that provide a concise and accessible, yet comprehensive, overview of election security that officials can offer voters:

- Election Security Presentation Script
- Voter Handout
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Other EAC Voter Materials About Election Security

While no two jurisdictions' approaches to election security are exactly the same, each jurisdiction's approach is designed to ensure information security, physical security, cybersecurity and continuity of operations in the event of a disaster. This EAC's election security video and its accompanying materials are intended to inform voters of the broad concepts behind and multi-layered approach to ensuring election security.

Description of Video

The EAC's 5-minute long election security video is intended to educate American voters about the steps election administrators take to protect elections. The product was envisioned to be used as part of election administration outreach to civic groups or an overview to election workers about election security before jurisdiction-specific training.

The video examines the role registration, physical security, poll workers and voting equipment play in ensuring safe, accurate, fair and accessible elections. The video also explains how the decentralized American election administration system protects election integrity and American voters, and it examines the security measures in place for vote by mail ballots, election night reporting and voting technology overall. In addition, the video highlights ballot handling measures, post-election audits used to further validate results, and the planning most jurisdictions do to ensure election continuity in the face of unexpected events or natural disasters.

Presentation Script (Prior to playing video)

Since the 2016 federal election, voters have had lingering questions about the accuracy and integrity of American elections and what election officials are doing to increase election security.

Such questions are fair and indicative of an engaged electorate who want to protect the fundamental bedrock of American democracy: the right to vote.

While significant strides have been made since the last presidential election, election security has long been a priority for election officials. In fact, layers of security are built into the election process. From chain of custody and access control to system access logs and result auditing, election officials work diligently to secure each part of the process.

Election administrators are aware of threats to election systems and do not take them lightly. In response, officials are constantly adapting processes to address new and emerging threats.

While those seeking to undermine Americans' faith in our election system are persistent in their attempts and creative in their approach, election officials are up to the task of protecting your vote. We understand the need for a resilient and secure election system, as well as our obligation to keep the voting process itself accessible, accurate and transparent.

This brief EAC video provides a broad overview of the election security measures in place to maintain the integrity and accessibility of elections.

Voter Handout

The handout is a timeline showing security at all phases of the election process and is intended to be used as a take-home material for voters. The handout can also be used as a visual reference for election officials who do not have the time or A/V capabilities to show the video, but want to inform voters of the same concepts. It is visually consistent with the video itself to help voters recall information they learned.

Frequently Asked Questions

After watching the EAC video, voters are likely to have jurisdiction-specific questions. It is important for presenters to know what they are authorized to say about state and local election security in order to respond to such questions. In addition to jurisdiction-specific questions, voters may have more general questions about security and the election process. Here are some questions that may arise, as well as suggested answers.

How is my personal information protected during the election process?

There are many layers of security in place to protect voters' personal information. Only authorized personnel have access to the voter registration database. Database traffic is monitored for irregularities, such as multiple log-in attempts or above average traffic. Response and mitigation plans are also in place to ensure continuity should unauthorized access or irregular activity be detected.

When the database is accessed or changed, details from that session are logged. Routine backups ensure data can be restored if any unexpected modifications are made. Also, even though data are public record, personal information is only released in accordance with a state's legal guidelines.

Why is voter registration necessary for election security?

Voter registration ensures that only those meeting state eligibility requirements are able to vote. Voter registration also keeps track of who has cast a ballot in an election.

If a voter believes they are eligible and registered to vote but do not appear on the registration list or does not have the required form of ID, that voter can cast a provisional ballot.

What goes into physical security?

Voting equipment is sealed and observed throughout the election process by approved election observers. Ballots are kept in safes, vaults, and other secure areas maintained by a clerk's office, which is often within a secure facility. Completed ballots are transported to local election headquarters in sealed, secure containers and typically, only a limited number of people can access ballots.

How is by mail voting kept secure?

Signature requirements for mailed ballots allow election officials to verify a mailed ballot has been filled out by the correct voter. Signatures on file are compared with those on the envelope containing mailed ballots. Measures are in place to ensure ballots are as private as those completed at a polling booth. Mailed ballots are typically delivered to and picked up from the

post office by two election office staff and transported in a secure container. These ballots are also processed by teams of election staff to ensure the integrity of the counting process.

How do election workers ensure the security of elections?

Poll workers, elections staff, and election observers go through quality training to ensure everyone understands their role in the process and the standard operating procedures that govern various election tasks and activities. Training typically covers issues such as physical security and appropriate cybersecurity hygiene.

There are often multiple people involved in key elections activities, so no one person could compromise important election tasks or the overall results.

How do I know election security procedures are being followed?

Transparency is a critical part of election security. Almost all processes and procedures require two or more trained personnel be involved, and these election workers have taken an oath to uphold state election laws and protect election security. Representatives of political parties or candidates, and sometimes even members of the general public, are also allowed to observe and monitor activities throughout the election processes.

What if a disaster happens that calls the accuracy of an election into question?

Most election jurisdictions have emergency contingency plans to ensure voters can still cast their ballots and the outcome of the election will be accurate and fair, even in the event of an emergency. The Election Assistance Commission provides election worker cyber hygiene training, checklists, best practice recommendations and other resources to help state and local election systems remain secure, even in the event of an emergency. Election officials have emergency plans for emergencies ranging from natural disasters and power loss, to election system breaches and attacks on polling places.

How are election results verified?

Voting equipment is given logic and accuracy tests against a known set of marked ballots to ensure tabulators are counting ballots correctly. Post-election audits also ensure votes are counted correctly and procedures associated with transporting and securing ballots were followed throughout the election process.

On election night, there are multiple sources of election results. Election data are reported by local jurisdictions, typically precinct by precinct, and these data are then uploaded to the state's election reporting system. This distributed system provides an archive of the results. If there is a problem with the reporting system, these archived copies can be used as a backup.

After Election Day, each election jurisdiction engages in a canvassing process, where the entire election is reconciled. This canvass ensures that the number of voters recorded as having voted coincides with the number of ballots cast.

What standards are voting equipment held to?

Almost all states use the requirements stated in the Election Assistance Commission's Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG) to evaluate voting systems. The VVSG contains more than 1,000 security, software, hardware, functionality, usability and accessibility requirements. These guidelines are continually updated as security concerns evolve.

Do all jurisdictions follow these guidelines?

This video was meant to serve as a very general overview of election security. No two jurisdiction's approach to election security is exactly the same.

[Prepare a brief description of how your jurisdiction's security measures differ from the methods shown in the video]

Other EAC Voter Materials About Elections

[A Voter's Guide to Federal Elections](#)

[10 Tips for Voters](#)

[American Elections: Understanding Cybersecurity](#)

Other information available at www.eac.gov.